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Chairman: Ms. Daes (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Greece)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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In the absence of Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Ms. Daes (Greece), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 161: Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (A/52/895 and A/52/911)

1. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) (A/52/895). The operation was the first new peacekeeping mission to be established in some time, and the first for which the new contingent-owned equipment arrangements had been fully implemented. The report covered two periods, the initial three-month period from 15 April to 15 July 1998, and the maintenance of the Mission from 1 July to 30 November 1998. The cost estimate of $20.8 million for the maintenance of the mission reflected a voluntary contribution in kind of $967,400 from the Government of France; cost estimates for that period were to be found in paragraphs 15 and 16. No estimates had been prepared for the electoral component and the liquidation phase, as his office was awaiting proposals from the Secretary-General.

2. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/52/911) said that the Secretary-General's estimate of $20.8 million gross for the period from 27 March to 30 June 1998 included extrabudgetary resources. In paragraph 27 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended an appropriation of $18,560,600 gross. The estimates of $28.8 million for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998 included $1.1 million in voluntary contributions; in paragraph 28 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's request. The Advisory Committee's comments had led to a slight technical adjustment in the area of staff costs, as explained in paragraph 22. The comments of the Advisory Committee regarding the arrangements for troop rations were to be found in paragraphs 18, 19 and 20.

3. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) expressed the displeasure of his delegation that the relevant reports had only just been released, allowing no time for study of the issues. The late issuance of documents was a major concern and the Secretariat must take steps to correct the situation in order to ensure the effective functioning of the Organization. He noted with regret that, as one peacekeeping operation in Africa was liquidated, another was replacing it. His delegation had also taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. It hoped that the international community would support initiatives to usher in peace in the African continent. As long as Africa remained in an economic quagmire, peace would be difficult to achieve.

4. He commended the Secretariat on the rapid and smooth deployment of contingents, which confirmed his belief that, with the commitment of the international community, the United Nations could have a significant influence in conflict situations. The mandate of MINURCA was of limited duration, extending 90 days after the results of the planned elections were announced, with the drawdown to begin no more than 60 days later. The elections were currently scheduled for August/September 1998 and the transition that would take place thereafter was crucially important to sustained peace and security in the region.

5. His delegation was grateful to the Governments which had contributed troops to the peacekeeping operation and those which had indicated their intention to do so and he asked whether the target deployment of 1,200 troops had been achieved. He also expressed appreciation to those countries which had made contributions and enquired about the status of the trust fund.

6. According to the report of ACABQ, at the request of some troop-contributing countries, troops were receiving a cash allowance of $11.04 per person per day instead of rations. He wondered how that figure had been arrived at and whether individuals could opt for the cash allowance or whether a contingent as a whole must choose that formula. He wondered what steps had been taken to avoid the risk of double payments. He requested an update on the status of recruitment of civilian personnel. He understood that the troop-contributing countries had not yet signed the Memorandum of Understanding, and he asked for clarifications. He would also appreciate an explanation of how the special account for MINURCA had been established.

7. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) said, with regard to the late issuance of the report, that the Security Council had adopted its resolution 1159 (1998) establishing the peacekeeping operation on 27 March. In accordance with established procedures, on 30 March his office had requested commitment authority from ACABQ; that authority had been received on 13 April. The report had been finalized on 11 May, as negotiations between the

Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the troop-contributing countries were ongoing and had been more complex than expected. He felt that the Secretariat should be commended for producing the report in time for consideration at the second part of the resumed session rather than criticized.

8. As of 1 May 1998, the 1,200 troops were almost all on the ground; only one contingent's deployment had been delayed. With regard to voluntary contributions to the trust fund, none had been received as yet.

9. The payment of a cash allowance in lieu of rations was an arrangement which had been inherited from the previous mission. The cost of providing rations had been calculated at $17 per person for the first 30 days and $15 thereafter, including the costs of transportation, handling and warehousing. The daily allowance of $11.04 represented a savings for the mission. He saw no potential for problems of double payments; security arrangements for the handling of large amounts of cash were a matter of greater concern.

10. With regard to the status of recruitment of civilian staff, as of 11 May, 46 international staff had been deployed and a further 26 were in travel status. Of the 24 civilian police experts, 8 would be deployed by 29 May. Negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding were continuing, and it was a frequent practice to sign such documents after a contingent was in place. As for the establishment of the special account, the Security Council had authorized the deployment of troops from 15 March, and it was the usual practice to establish the account as of the date of authorization.

11. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that his delegation did indeed commend the Secretariat for the quick deployment of the mission, but it still maintained that it was difficult, if not impossible, to discuss an issue in depth without receiving the documents well in advance.

12. The reports indicated that the payment of a cash allowance in lieu of rations would result in savings to the operation. If so, he wondered why the Secretariat had not pursued that approach as opposed to the provision of rations.

13. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that the provision of rations was standard United Nations practice and the cash payments were an exception in the case of MINURCA.

14. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) requested clarification of the estimates for the periods 15 April to 30 June 1998 and 1 July to 30 November 1998 as contained in document A/52/895. The figures for rental of vehicles given in paragraph 24 of annex III.C did not appear to correspond to the estimated requirements for oil and petrol in paragraph 26. Similarly, the requirements for the training programmes during the first period were $43,500, while they dropped to only $3,000 for the period from 1 July to 30 November 1998 (para. 49). The fluctuations in the figures for air and surface freight (para. 50) also required some explanation.

15. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that he was interested to know whether an attempt had been made to pursue the cash payment approach in lieu of rations and, if so, whether any difficulties had been encountered.

16. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division), replying to the representative of Saudi Arabia, said that the costs of peacekeeping missions were most substantial during the initial period of deployment; that would in large part explain the significant reductions in the estimates for the second period. In the area of training, for example, the estimate for the initial period was higher to allow for the acquisition of equipment. The second period reflected only the costs of the trainers.

17. The current practice with regard to rations had been established with the approval of the General Assembly as part of the reform package. It was not the usual practice to make cash payments because of the potential for theft.

18. There was no link between the costs of rental of armoured personnel carriers and the requirements for petrol, oil and lubricants, which were based on the number of vehicles and assumed usage.

19. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) requested information on the comparative costs of providing rations and giving cash allowances to military personnel.

Agenda item 132: Financing of the United Nations Mission in Haiti *(continued)* (A/52/512, A/52/833 and A/52/905)

Agenda item 141: Financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti *(continued)* (A/52/798, A/52/854, A/52/818 and A/52/869)

20. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) (A/52/833) covered the period from 1 to 31 July 1996, when the mandate of UNMIH had been terminated. The approved appropriation had been $1,197,100 gross ($1,185,800 net), and actual expenditure had been $1,159,000 gross and net, resulting in an unencumbered balance of $38,100 gross ($26,800 net). The General Assembly might wish to take a decision regarding the treatment of the unencumbered balance.

21. The report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH) (A/52/854) covered the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997. The amount appropriated had been $56,105,000 gross ($53,708,600 net) and the expenditures had amounted to $46,988,000 gross ($45,428,900 net), resulting in an unencumbered balance of $9,117,000 gross ($8,279,700 net). The action to be taken by the General Assembly was a decision regarding the treatment of the unencumbered balance.

22. The report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH), the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH) and the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) (A/52/869) contained the revised budget for the periods from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 and from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999, as well as the requirements for the maintenance of MIPONUH from 1 July 1998 to 30 November 1998. The report was presented in the simplified format requested by the Advisory Committee. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly were set out in paragraph 17.

23. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report on the financing of UNMIH (A/52/905). Paragraphs 2 to 6 dealt with the financial performance report for the liquidation of UNMIH from 1 to 31 July 1996; in that connection, the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should take note of the unencumbered balance of $38,100 gross ($26,800 net) and defer further action until the final performance report of UNMIH was received.

24. Paragraphs 7 to 12 dealt with the financial performance report for UNSMIH from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997; in that connection, the Advisory Committee recommended that the unencumbered balance of $9,117,000 gross ($8,279,700 net) should be credited to Member States.

25. Paragraphs 13 to 19 related to the revised cost estimates for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 for UNSMIH, UNTMIH and MIPONUH. The Advisory Committee had requested that the original estimates presented by the Secretary-General should be reviewed, the presentation improved, and the information updated. The Secretariat had accordingly revised the original estimates from $34,334,400 to $30,318,800, a reduction of $4,015,600. The amount now proposed – $30,318,800 gross ($29,080,800 net) included a voluntary contribution of $1,999,900. The Advisory Committee recommended the appropriation and assessment of $13,227,900 gross ($12,602,500 net), in addition to the amount of $15,091,000 gross ($14,478,400 net) already appropriated and assessed under General Assembly resolution 51/15 B.

26. Paragraphs 20 and 21 dealt with the revised cost estimates for MIPONUH. The revised estimates of $18,524,800 gross ($17,779,200 net) represented a decrease of $904,000 gross ($821,300 net) from the original estimates. The Advisory Committee recommended, taking into account its observations in paragraph 23 of its report on peacekeeping operations (A/52/860), a reduction of 5 per cent in the proposed appropriation and assessment for MIPONUH, resulting in the amount of $15,970,070 gross ($15,261,750 net).

27. **Mr. Boynton** (United States of America) said that UNMIH was an important mission which had several significant accomplishments to its credit and his Government had made voluntary contributions in kind to support it. His delegation welcomed the competitive bulk purchases and associated economies of scale and the savings achieved through the use of wet-lease agreements for contingent-owned equipment.

Other matters

28. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said that his delegation sought clarification about the composition of the teams sent by the Secretariat to negotiate new arrangements for contingent-owned equipment. In three reports – in documents A/52/860, paragraph 47, A/52/860/Add.1, paragraph 10, and A/52/868, paragraph 6 – the Advisory Committee had referred to the use of gratis personnel to conduct such negotiations. In informal consultations, however, the Secretariat had provided conflicting information.

29. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, when preparing its reports, the Advisory Committee was very careful to check the information it received; in most cases, information provided orally was not used until it was confirmed in writing.

30. In paragraph 10 of document A/52/860/Add.1, the Advisory Committee indicated that Headquarters staff had not been involved in the negotiations on the new contingent-owned equipment arrangements, and that negotiations with the troop-contributing countries had been conducted by three gratis personnel from three countries. That information had been provided to the Advisory Committee in writing by the Secretariat, in a document dated 25 March 1998. If different information had been provided to the Fifth Committee, the Secretariat would have to explain the reasons for such a change.

31. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) said he could confirm that the Secretariat had provided written information to the Advisory Committee. He had subsequently been informed by the Field Administration and Logistics Division that the information had proved to be misleading. The Secretariat would provide a written statement to the Committee and send a copy to the Advisory Committee.

32. **Mr. Persaud** (Chief of the Finance Management Support Service) said that, in the case of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, a team of three persons had reviewed the new arrangements relating to contingent-owned equipment and death and disability benefits. No negotiations had been conducted by gratis personnel, but there had been three gratis personnel involved in various other processes. The information provided to the Advisory Committee had been incorrect and the Secretariat had issued a correction clarifying the role of the three gratis personnel.

33. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said it was highly regrettable that the Advisory Committee had been given inaccurate information; the question arose as to whether such occurrences were routine or exceptional.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.